

## Newark Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Newark Youth Opportunities Unlimited is an organization created by the Mayor of Newark at the instigation of Rutgers - The State University. It is composed of representatives of the University, the Newark City Government, the Board of Education in Newark, the Council of Social Agencies, the Newark Housing Authority and Urban Renewal Agency, and other local agencies and voluntary organizations.

YOU's intention is to develop and carefully test ways of encouraging culturally deprived Newark youth to express their productive potentialities. In pursuing this responsibility, YOU is guided by the conviction that these youths, like everyone, will invest their energies in those activities which promise to "pay off" in several ways:

1. By giving them a sense of doing something important--of participating in activities or tasks that they and their associates define as worthy, important, useful, respectable.
2. By giving them a sense of personal acceptance and appreciation by their intimate peers.
3. By giving them a sense that persons in authority genuinely respect their rights and interests.
4. By giving them a sense of "fun" and "enjoyment", as these are defined in their circles.

On the basis of that conviction, YOU proposes to test out, under as controlled conditions as possible, several specific ways of: (a) creating activities with the characteristics described above; (b) making those activities readily available and known to culturally deprived youths; (c) improving youths' incentives to take advantage of such opportunities; and (d) reducing the attractiveness of other, destructive, activities through which many socially disadvantaged youths now achieve the "pay offs" described above. Among the ways of doing those four things that YOU is now seeking to refine and implement are these:

1. In one school, matched with a control school, an effort will be made to harness group pressures in the service of academic effort and to stimulate students' motivations to work more vigorously on their school subjects by offering frequent and substantial prizes through PTA's to the classes showing the greatest rate of improvement between successive marking periods. These prizes will be things -- including perhaps cash -- for which the students themselves express a strong desire. In order to guard against injustice to classes whose already-high averages bar significant improvement, similar prizes will also be given to classes with the highest absolute records. For similar reasons, prizes will also be given to individuals with records of significant improvement and with high absolute records.

1. In a first school, we will leave the incentive system unchanged and attempt experimentally to vary teaching methods in accordance with the best judgment of the professional educators in YOU. For example, significantly lower teacher-student ratios might be tried; new textbooks; teachers' aides, in the form of National Service Corpsmen, local volunteers, or paid assistants; remedial reading clinics; and so on.
  2. In a third school, we will leave both the incentive system and the teaching methods unchanged, and organize tutorial or "study sessions" with students after school hours, in the evening. This will also be done with the help of National Service Corpsmen, local volunteers, or paid assistants.
  3. In a fourth school, we will inaugurate all three experimental programs simultaneously.
  4. In at least one school district we will organize a pre-kindergarten "conceptual development" program for three- or four-year old children in order to test ways of improving their "reading readiness".
  5. In from three to six neighborhoods we will help teenagers (through training, provision of minimal adult supervision, and through financial subsidy) to organize recreation centers of their own choosing. These may range from pool parlors, through coffee and soft-drink shops, to juke-box dancing places. In addition, either in connection with such recreational centers or independently we will help teenagers and younger children to organize bands, dance groups, and hobby shops.
- In all these activities, our emphasis will be not only on providing facilities but, at least equally, on giving youth opportunity, incentive, and training in responsible management of their own enterprises.
7. For reasons similar to those just mentioned, and in addition for the purpose of creating job opportunities, we propose to organize crews of youths to engage in the following activities:
    - a. Auto repair and spare-part repair and exchange;
    - b. Lawn maintenance in surrounding suburbs and in city-owned housing projects, parks, and other places;
    - c. Painting and repair of privately-owned buildings at landlord expense. (We intend to seek use, in this connection, of a city ordinance permitting the city to bring deteriorated buildings up to standard and to charge the landlord for the expense.)

- d. Construction, maintenance, and equipping of vests, lots for playgrounds.
  - e. Snow and ice removal.
  - f. Conducting younger children on "horizon-expanding" tours (with adult supervision).
  - g. House-cleaning.
  - h. Sanitation-maintenance in designated blocks.
  - i. Clearing and maintaining camp sites for neighborhood use in county, state, and national parks.
  - j. Assisting in neighborhood day camps.
8. We will establish in selected experimental neighborhoods "Guided Group Interaction" meetings, patterned after the highly successful Essexfield and Highfields Centers in New Jersey, but with prevention as the aim, rather than treatment of juvenile offenders. It will be the aim of these meetings to help youths (a) to find their way out of the defensive adjustment they have inevitably made to a situation of no incentives and little opportunity; and (b) to see and understand realistically the alternatives open to them and the consequences of choosing one rather than another alternative.
9. Partly in order to provide employment, and partly to enlist the cooperation of indigenous adult leaders, we will employ, and train local adults to staff the many projects described above, and to be described below.
10. We will establish in three to six neighborhoods decentralized "Urban Information and Aid Centers." By arrangement with the Welfare Department, we will attempt to make the Centers attractive to and known by residents by making them distribution centers for surplus commodities. Our primary purpose, however, will be to experiment in such centers with different ways of "reaching out" to residents with social work services, and of coordinating the work of the several different public and private agencies on municipal, county, and state levels with which many disadvantaged residents have contact. More specifically:
- a. In one neighborhood, we might locate in the center representatives of the State Board of Child Welfare, the County Welfare Department, and the City Health and Welfare Department, in addition to appropriate private agencies. The effort would be to explore the efficacy of thus centralizing -- but on a very local level -- the various bureaucratic dispensing welfare aid.

- b. In another neighborhood, we might staff the Information and Aid Center with professional personnel who have no formal affiliation with existing agencies, in order to explore ways in which they can come to be liaison agents between residents and the bureaucracies with which they deal.
  - c. In still another neighborhood, the Information and Aid Center will be headquarters for National Service Corpsmen, or local volunteers, who will work under the direction of one or more professional directors. Each Corpsman or volunteer will be assigned to one block, with the task of getting to know intimately all the families on his block; referring, escorting, and representing them to agencies whose services they need; encouraging parents to participate in PTAs, Neighborhood Councils, etc.; and helping them to take advantage of the various opportunities described elsewhere in this review.
  - d. The attractiveness of at least one of the Information and Aid Centers might be increased, experimentally, by making it, in addition to or instead of a distribution center for surplus commodities, a place to which residents could turn for anything from a place to read, play cards, drink coffee, get advice, find a "friend in court", baby-sitting services, or home-economics education and training.
  - e. In at least one and probably more of the centers, we will experiment, in cooperation with the Travelers' Aid Society, with ways of identifying newcomers to the city and helping them to become quickly and smoothly integrated into their new urban environment.
11. Both as part of and in addition to the work of such Urban Information and Aid Centers, we propose to seek ways of tying Aid to Dependent Children and other types of welfare payments into educational and training programs for the adult recipients.
  12. We will organize teen-age and young adult clubs to receive training in how to deal with urban complexities. This work is based on our view that the urban knowledge of rural 4H Clubs' focus on animal husbandry is a focus on bureaucratic-legal rights and obligations and mechanisms of enforcement.
  13. We will, particularly in the experimental schools described above, organize in-service seminars for teachers and other school personnel (counselors, social workers, nurses, etc.). The purpose of these seminars will be both to provide school personnel with a better understanding of the special problems, nature, and potentials of their students and to provide a

forum in which teachers can exchange, develop, and refine their ideas for improving the performance of their professional functions.

In order more fully to recognize and reward the conscientious and imaginative performance by teachers of their very difficult tasks we propose to find ways of publicly rewarding teachers who propose the best ideas for improved methods and content.

14. Efforts will be made to stimulate reading and the use of library facilities by greatly increasing the supply of books available in experimental areas and perhaps employing an incentive system similar to those described with respect to the performance of students in the classroom.
15. In addition to the evaluation of each of the foregoing experiments by Rutgers - The State University, all of the action programs will be constantly guided and informed by the results of the research project support for which it is being requested from the Office of Education.

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